

## Traffic Accidents Claim Lives of Three Students

BY JOHN CHAPPELL: Staff Writer

A North Moore High School senior and her sister died Sunday when a pickup truck struck their car north of Robbins.

Devin Michelle Garner, 17, was to graduate May 30. Her sister, Alisha Garner, 21, graduated from Appalachian State University in Boone last week, a year early.

Alisha Garner was driving the car. Both were killed instantly, according to Highway Patrol Trooper Bryon J. Smith, who investigated.

The accident occurred on Needham's Grove Road at Busby Road, Smith said. The pickup was traveling north on Needham's Grove Road toward Randolph County. The passenger car was coming off Busby Road. The car stopped at the stop sign and then pulled into the path of the truck, Smith said.

Greg Myrick, 27, the driver of the truck, was not charged. He was not seriously injured.

Smith said there had been a number of accidents at that intersection, though he could not remember any previous fatality.

Throughout the day Monday, people around Robbins were talking about previous accidents and near misses at that intersection. Some said traffic approaching from Busby Road is hard to see from Needham's Grove Road, especially when the nearby church parking lot is filled with cars.

The girls' aunt, Betty Asbill, agrees. She says something needs to be done. Her sister, Deborah, is Alisha's and Devin's mother

"I hope in the future we can get either a four-way stop or a caution light," she said. "It is a very dangerous intersection."

This is not the first time someone close to her has been hurt there, Asbill said.

"This is about the fourth one in our family," she said. "These two were killed, and there was another niece, Jennifer Dunlap, that was badly hurt. She is a cousin to these two children that got killed. She's married now, but that was her name then."

Asbill said she already spoke to one county commissioner asking that something be done about the intersection.

"It is too late for us," she said. "If we can stop it from happening again, that will help. That is what is on my heart, let's put it that way."

The funeral will be at Needham's Grove Church at 2 p.m. today, with burial at their home church, Bascom Chapel.

Both of the Garners had been popular students at North Moore High School.

A memorial service will take place at 7 tonight in the school auditorium, according to Principal Mike Tylavsky.

"Alisha is Devin's older sister," Tylavsky said. "She graduated with the class of 2000 and went off to Appalachian. She worked real hard, went to summer school and everything else, and graduated in three years."

Alisha and Devin were the only children of Kim and Deborah Garner.

"Alisha just graduated from Appalachian last Sunday, last Sunday," he said. "Everybody has told me 'wonderful student, wonderful girl, a great family.' How sad this is! I can't even imagine what it would be like to lose a child, let alone lose two."

Devin was to have graduated May 30. She had planned to attend a baccalaureate service at 7 p.m. on the day of the accident .

"Devin was such a nice kid, had a wonderful sense of humor," Tylavsky said. "She was an honor student, would have graduated with honors. She was in the top 10 percent of her class. She was the drum major of our band."

Devin was an alternate for a coveted slot as a teaching scholar, he said.

"She moved up in the last two weeks from number 86 to number 32," he said. "She wanted to be a teacher. What a loss."

First Bank of Robbins gives scholarships each year to one male and one female member of the North Moore graduating senior class. Devin won the award this year, along with another scholarship.

"She accepted it just last week," said Frances Cagle, who works for the bank. Cagle's son knew Devin.

Coincidentally, mother and son had been on their way home Sunday just about the time of the accident. Cagle said she noticed cars ahead slowing down.

"Something is going on," she said she told her son. "I said it might be a Highway Patrolman parked off to the side. But when we got up to where Busby Road cuts off, we could see flashing lights. We didn't know then what happened; but later my son said, 'Mom, you know you drove 45 the rest of the way home?'"

A subsequent telephone call brought the sad news to the Cagles.

"She was a wonderful girl," Cagle said. "I feel so sorry for their family."

Friends called the school, asking whether the auditorium could be used for a memorial service.

Tylavsky said the school quickly agreed to make it available when approached by a friend of the Garner family.

"Their minister will officiate," Tylavsky said. "Our chorus is going to sing. Our students will have the opportunity to get up and speak — a testimonial, or just to talk about Devin, and Alisha. Many of them here knew Alisha. This is as devastating for our kids as for our teachers. It is a small school, only 540 kids. A lot of our teachers taught both of these girls. Both really were loved by their teachers."

The loss has had a forceful impact on graduation week at North Moore High.

"We're devastated," Tylavsky said. "You know, this is supposed to be the time of the year that's exciting, and you celebrate the beginning of the next part of your life. It turns out to be a very sad moment, with graduation (next) Friday night."

#### PHS Student Runs Into Tree

BY MATTHEW MORIARTY: Staff Writer

A Pinecrest High School senior died Monday when the car he was driving went off the road and struck a tree near Pinehurst.

The victim, Jonathan R. Black, 18, was driving the car, according to the State Highway Patrol. Brandon Potter, also 18, was a passenger. He was treated at FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital and released.

According to the investigating officer, Trooper B.J. Smith, both youths were wearing seat belts.

The two boys were riding in a 1993 BMW along Murdocksville Road. The accident occurred about 11 a.m. The car was travelling at high speed around a left turn and ran off the left side of the road, Smith said.

Murdocksville Road runs from Pinehurst to just outside Carthage. The car belonged to Black and was the only vehicle involved in the wreck.

Black lived in Pinehurst. He would have graduated from Pinecrest High School on May 30. He was in the band and played the baritone saxophone. He was also an amateur guitarist and percussionist.

Black's father, Jim Black, went to Pinecrest Tuesday morning and spoke with the interim principal, Ron Alexander, and with his son's classmates in band class, Alexander said.

The father plans to purchase a baritone saxophone in his son's name for the band and is setting up a memorial fund with proceeds to go to the Pinecrest band.

He also wants to participate in the graduation ceremony May 30 in some way to honor Jonathan's memory, Alexander said. The school and the family have yet to decide on the details.

Jonathan Black was also currently working with the state Alcohol Law Enforcement office.

The family asks that contributions be made in Jonathan Black's memory to the Pinecrest High School band, 100 Pinecrest School Road, Southern Pines, N.C., 28387.

"He was a well-liked young man, by his peers and the band," Alexander said. "They are going to miss him."